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ABSTRACT

Prepared for use by teachers of mentally gifted students in grades 7 through 9, the booklet offers a curriculum design for the teaching of literature. Considered is the difficult developmental stage in late childhood and early adolescence when children begin to assert their roles as individuals and often have no adult model other than the friendly disc jockey; and offered as a replacement for the contemporary media model are heroes in literature. The hero in literature is discussed in terms of folk literature and mythology, and outlined is a sample unit on Greek mythical heroes. Examined in relation to the Faust theme are legends, historical eras, and modern versions (such as "Rosemary's Baby"). Such aspects of the Prometheus theme as lack of understanding, the Promethean legend, Prometheus as scientist, and as prototype are discussed. Portrayed in three case studies to show how schools influence adjustment of the gifted are students such as David, whose fifth grade teacher-rescuer recognized his need to learn in a manner different from his classmates and described him as "a cat of another stripe who must learn to blend in with his surroundings, but only after his stripes have been recognized as valuable". Under the teacher's management, David learned to temper his histrionics sufficiently to write, act a major role in, and manage many details for two musicals; and later, became a promising college student with potential for achievement as actor, producer, singer, or television performer. (MC)

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Teaching Gifted Students Literature in Grades Seven Through Nine

CALIFORNIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Wilson Riles – Superintendent of Public Instruction, Sacramento, 1973

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Teaching Gifted Students Literature in Grades Seven Through Nine

Prepared for the
DIVISION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION
California State Department of Education

by
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FOREWORD

California public schools are working hard to provide equal educational opportunities for all children in California. The schools are accomplishing this by ensuring that every child has the opportunity to profit to the full extent of his ability. Such an accomplishment becomes possible only when the educational program offered by the schools has depth and flexibility enough to meet individual needs.

This publication, *Teaching Gifted Students Literature in Grades Seven Through Nine,* contains information that should be valuable to administrators, consultants, teachers, and other professional personnel who are working with gifted children.

Literature programs for the gifted are designed to introduce the gifted child to the world of ideas through the study of literature. In addition, literature wisely selected opens the door for the gifted child to philosophy, psychology, history, drama, sociology, geography, anthropology, foreign languages, communications, and other fields.

In my opinion, literature is communication in its most vital and permanent form. It involves all of the skills of communication: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

I believe that this publication will have great value for those individuals who are entrusted with the teaching of the mentally gifted.

Superintendent of Public Instruction

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PREFACE

This publication is one of the products of an educational project authorized and funded under provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Title V. It is intended for use by the teachers of pupils whose mental ability is such that they are classified as mentally gifted. It is also recommended for use by administrators, consultants, and other professional personnel involved in helping gifted children.

Teaching Gifted Students Literature in Grades Seven Through Nine is one of a group of curriculum materials designed for use by teachers of the mentally gifted in grades one through three, four through six, seven through nine, and ten through twelve. These materials were prepared under the direction of Mary N. Meeker, Associate Professor of Education, and James Magary, Associate Professor of Educational Psychology, both of the University of Southern California.

Also developed as part of the education project is a series of curriculum guides for use in the teaching of mentally gifted minors in elementary and secondary schools. The guides contain practical suggestions that teachers can use to advantage in particular subject areas. These guides were prepared under the direction of John C. Gowan, Professor of Education, and Joyce Sonntag, Assistant Professor of Education, both of California State University, Northridge.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

For many students the years of early adolescence are pivotal in the development of attitudes and beliefs. These students are beginning to break away from the easy answers of childhood when parents or teachers provided ultimate authority in questions of right and wrong and good and bad. They want to learn what it will be like when they become adults. The changes in their bodies are outward evidence of similar changes happening within. Parents report that their twelve-, thirteen-, and fourteen-year-old children seem to be "different people" from the compliant individuals they were as younger children.

Generation Gap

For many families the generation gap begins when the child becomes eleven. It continues until he reaches adulthood. For some, the gap is never bridged. Unfortunately, during the very time when young people most need adult understanding and guidance, few opportunities exist for boys and girls to meet with friendly, accepting adults. When the children begin to assert their roles as individuals and turn away from home and family to increase their maturation, they often have no adult to turn to other than those whom they have learned about from the communications media. For many young adolescents, the only adult voice they hear regularly is that of the friendly disc jockey heard on their pocket transistor radios. They turn to him for answers to their questions.

Even in school, increasingly fewer opportunities exist for students to chat with a teacher whom they respect. In the self-contained elementary school classroom, the teacher can react, for example, to a child's concern about what to do when he is called "chicken" by the other children. But in the intermediate school or junior high school, emphasis on academic performance effectively blocks such one-to-one communication. School counselors, who must usually spend their time scheduling classes, seldom have time to listen to children.

Importance of Literature

English class can and should be a place where young people discover that they are not alone with their problems. The study of

great books can provide such an opportunity. Classroom discussions about characters in books can be relatively impersonal. Students can concentrate on a particular problem as well as on the personal characteristics of the individual having the problem. For example, the adolescent tempted to try drugs can empathize with Faust without revealing his concerns to a threatening authority figure. All important literature is an examination of the human condition as seen through the eyes of the author and communicated by the words and actions of his characters.

Literary Themes

Students can read in books about difficult choices made by other young people. In the safety of their own homes they can, vicariously, be somebody else. They learn to predict consequences and to make value judgments. They can identify with a hero or suffer with the victims of their own wrong decisions. The great themes of literature, which can provide new insights, include (1) the hero; (2) the Faust figure; and (3) Prometheus. All of these themes are fully discussed later in this publication.

Class Discussions

Teachers sensitive to the fears of young persons can build units of study around questions such as Could I be heroic? or How can I learn to decide between good actions or bad? or Is there such a thing as "situational ethics"? As the class shares information gained from individual research on various examples of the theme, students themselves will often bring up their own actions and concerns. The presence of an adult who listens and responds is important during such discussions. He can aid in bridging the generation gap.

Gifted boys and girls are not immune from growing pains because of their intellectual skills. They have the same problems and concerns of other young adolescents and need time for working out their ideas with an adult with whom they can communicate objectively, after whom they can model themselves, or by whom they feel accepted and respected. For the highly gifted youngster, reading may provide the only contact with the minds of individuals as gifted as himself. The reader is here referred to Ayn Rand's *Anthem* or to Taylor Caldwell's *Dear and Glorious Physician* for class discussion.

Young persons take many ideas from great literature. One thirteen-year-old student pointed out that one can't get upset over the perils of Evangeline because the poem is written in three-quarter time. A fourteen-year-old student questioned whether Prometheus could be a devil-figure since Lucifer means "light bearer" and Prometheus stole the sacred fire.

Pilot Class

The deductions and generalizations included in this publication concerning a "great themes" approach to literature are largely those made by members of a pilot class for underachieving gifted sophomores conducted at Palos Verdes High School in Rolling Hills, California. The investigative efforts and divergent thinking of the students were responsible for such insights as (1) twentieth-century authors usually do not provide for readers any handy guides for making ethical judgments like those "good" and "bad" angels presented by Christopher Marlowe; (2) today's "heroes" are often nonheroic; and (3) God's role is now often assumed by a committee. The astute commentary provided by these young people in their written papers and in oral discussions with their fellow students in class and privately with their teacher was inestimable in terms of eliciting new and creative thought.

Further, the three young men described in the case studies in the last chapter of this publication should be recognized particularly because of their continuing efforts to bridge both the generation gap and the intellectual gap between them and their teachers. Stan and David and John, while well-read individuals in their own rights, are representative of a precious segment of the gifted population. Their intellectual potential exceeds that of the average gifted child at least as much as the latter exceeds the potential of the nongifted child. They are trying to communicate their dreams, aspirations, and problems. Stan uses words, David employs actions, and John chooses to communicate with products. Regardless of the media used by extremely gifted young people, teachers must train themselves to receive the message. Educators owe a monumental debt to such young persons when the youngsters choose to share their insights and experiences. Few persons are geniuses. One can learn what it means to be extraordinarily gifted only by listening to the gifted, whatever their means of communication may be.

Chapter 2

The Hero in Literature

Some educators concerned with the causes of youthful unrest claim that young persons today have no heroes, or the wrong heroes, with whom to identify. An examination of fictional and nonfictional heroes of the past, as recorded in literature, will help to discover a basis for making comparisons of heroes of the past with those of the present.

Folk Literature

The heroes of folk literature are similar in many ways. Odysseus, Theseus, Siegfried, and Roland emerge from the pages of history larger than life. They are bigger and braver and more altruistic than any boy or girl who has just become a teen-ager can hope to be. On the other hand, the contemporary exploits of James Bond are very popular with young teen-agers. The reasons for this change in the concept of the hero in literature are worth consideration.

Epic Hero

Like folk songs, folk literature or epic poetry was usually based on a semilegendary figure. Songs and stories about him were fashioned around the campfire and were passed on from person to person. Eventually, many of these songs and stories were compiled in a written piece of literature.

The epic hero El Cid can be contrasted with James Bond. The earliest known manuscript concerning El Cid (real name Rodrigo Diaz de Bivar) was written about 1140, fully a century after his birth. According to Abbot Peter, who based his story on tales told by Spanish troubadours, El Cid for the most part rode over the eastern mountains in the company of his knights, stopping from time to time to defeat the Franks or the Moors and, subsequently, spending long periods of time in distributing the plunder taken in battle. His public deeds were recorded, but little information was given on his personal life, such as the details recorded by Ian Fleming in describing James Bond. For example, Fleming describes food that Bond liked to eat: grilled sole, a large mixed salad, dressing laced with mustard, Brie cheese and toast, and white Bordeaux. The point to be made here is that readers know today's heroes better than they know the epic heroes of the past because today's heroes are described in much greater detail.

Changes in Attitude

The legend of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table is a typical example of the changes that have occurred over the centuries in attitudes toward the hero. An eighth-century historian, Nennius, wrote of Arthur as a military chieftain, very similar to El Cid, who fought the invading Saxons some 200 years before Nennius' time. The figure of Arthur is only slightly less epic as recorded by Sir Thomas Malory in *Le Morte d'Arthur* (1485) and by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, in *The Idylls of the King* (1859). However, Arthur emerges as a real person in Terence H. White's *The Once and Future King* (1958). A portion of this book, "The Sword in the Stone," was the basis for a Walt Disney film and a musical play written by Lerner and Loewe entitled *Camelot,* which portrayed a king with whom observers could identify. White's Arthur, concerned about everyday problems, asks "What are the simple folk doing tonight?" in his efforts to live through a boring evening at home with Guinevere.

It is possible to trace this concern for an individual's daily problems to the growth of the communications media. As films and, later, television captured each intimate detail, authors also began to record such minutiae. Can a hero be heroic when one knows such details about him as whether he wears an undershirt?

Epic Conventions

It is enjoyable to find ways in which today's heroes possess the characteristics of epic heroes. Students of literature call these characteristics "epic conventions." These characteristics are the following:

1. *License to kill.* Heroes often have the power to decide who will live and who will die. They derive their power from God or from the gods in the case of early heroes. Both Roland and El Cid are encouraged by the Angel Gabriel. Today's heroes have the power of life and death because of "the law" or because of a delegated role connected with their jobs. In the case of James Bond, his possession of an identification number containing two zeroes (Agent 007) gives him power to kill with impunity.

2. *Symbol of authority.* Roland has a sword named Durendal; Arthur, one named Excalibur. The swords of the epic heroes are visible evidence that the heroes have license to kill. Beowulf finds a sword, crudely fashioned long before by the giants, hanging on the wall of the cavern when he needs it to kill the ogress Grendel. Guns become symbolic swords for later heroes; Davy Crockett's "Ol' Betsy" is a typical example. This tradition of ultimate authority possessed by the hero is not limited to literature. Today's comic

superheroes can "zap" their enemies in a number of ways although killing has gone out of style through the zealous efforts of mothers of comic book devotees. Samantha, in television's "Bewitched," renders her opponents powerless by a simple twitch of her nose because she is a witch and therefore has such powers.

3. *Special mode of transportation.* For many heroes the particular type of transportation they use is a remarkable horse. Bellerophon had Pegasus. Robert E. Lee had Traveler. The ships of Ulysses and Aeneas were quite extraordinary vehicles, and without them the heroes often suffered degradation and loss of power. Without his 1930, 4½-liter Bently coupe, James Bond often gets into serious trouble. The *Enterprise* conveys a shipload of space heroes on television's "Star Trek," and no disaster is quite as threatening as when a character is cut off from the mother ship. The writer H. G. Wells once found the mode of conveyance used in a book of his was important enough to name the book for it (*The Time Machine*).

4. *Reason for moving about* (usually altruistic and noble). Jason the Argonaut hunts for the Golden Fleece; Galahad seeks the Holy Grail; Arthur repels invaders; and Roland helps Charlemagne push the armies of Islam out of Europe for good. Each is on a quest, has a purpose to fulfill, or has a vow to keep. Before the literature of the Middle Ages, very few of the heroes accomplished such tasks for the love of a woman. Many of the women in the epics are relatively faceless unless they are fulfilling the heroic role; for example, Jaroslavna in the Russian legend of Igor.

The crew of the *Enterprise* is on a five-year mission to explore the farthest reaches of space, to go boldly where no man has gone before.

5. *Quality of leadership.* The epic heroes are leaders: the king of a country, the captain of a ship, or the leader of an army. Igor is a prince of Russia. Arthur is a king. Today's heroes tend to be loners or somebody other than the captain. James Bond must work alone for his own safety. In television's "Star Trek" Mr. Spock was chosen as the hero by youthful viewers although the series was originally written around the figure of Captain Kirk. This reader and viewer identification with heroes among the nonheroic may be a peculiarity of the twentieth century. Early Charlie Chaplin movies showed the beginnings of concern for the problems of the little man. Kafka wrote of nonheroes. Hemingway, on the other hand, may have been a throwback because he told stories of individuals who deal with the world in the style of epic heroes.

6. *Long white beard.* Students of literature delight in tracing the old gentleman with the long white beard. In the story of Roland, Charlemagne possesses this symbol of wisdom and age. El Cid, the

Spanish folk hero, grows a long white beard after he subdues the pagans, and Arthur grows his when he begins to draw knights together for the Round Table. The publication date of T. H. White's *The Once and Future King* (1958) may explain why Merlin's beard is liberally besmeared with owl droppings even as he is guiding the education of young Arthur. When, in J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye,* Holden stops to see Old Spencer, his history teacher, as he was leaving Pencey Prep, Old Spencer should be wearing a white beard in the tradition of the epic heroes and should offer Holden some worthwhile advice. Instead, the visit is a complete failure, and Holden reports that he could see Old Spencer's white and hairless legs under his shabby bathrobe. How far have our symbols of wisdom and age fallen!

7. *Visibility.* The early heroes can be seen by friend and foe alike. Roland, who rides a white horse, seems almost to glitter in the sunlight as he rides to battle sheathed in armor, holding a lance with pure white pennants and long tassels streaming from it. Prince Igor leads his warriors in a golden line in the white light of day. The shields of El Cid's armies reflect the sun.

The Plantagenets, early kings of England who became almost legendary in their country's history, were big men, far taller than their soldiers. Furthermore, they had red hair. Marshall McLuhan claims that Hitler would have been laughed out of office long before achieving his goals if television had been invented during the 1930s and Hitler could have been seen by the Germans.

8. *Other epic conventions.* Many additional conventions can be watched for in myths and legends. Swans almost always herald death, and fire is often associated with immortality. A sacred island or a sacred mountain exists to which the hero retires when he needs to regain his strength. The crossing of a river or immersion in water sometimes shows a change in the fortunes of the hero. El Cid lies sleeping alone near the Duero River when the Angel Gabriel appears to him and urges him to continue his efforts. The River Donets, after hailing and praising Prince Igor, allows him to pass during his escape. The idea of gold bringing death can be seen in *Beowulf,* the *Nibelungenlied,* and other folk legends.

Mythology

The history of a country is at least partially portrayed in its mythology. People of any given land may acquire their attitudes and beliefs because of those persons they choose for their heroes.

Many heroes in modern literature and in other means of communication are subhuman or nonhuman. Mr. Spock is half Vulcan. J. R. R. Tolkein's Frodo is a "hobbit." Barnabas Collins,

who enjoyed great popularity among teen-agers during the summer of 1968, was a vampire on a television series entitled "Dark Shadows." Gifted boys and girls should examine why heroes are of this type in an era characterized by many philosophers as "realistic." Students should examine the art and music of the 1970s to discover any relationship between today's literature and other art forms. What is the role of fantasy in today's world? Why is fantasy popular in the atomic era?

Sample Unit on Greek Mythical Heroes

This sample unit on Greek mythical heroes is intended to provide suggestions for classroom activities to be directed by the teacher of average and gifted students.

A. Average students
   1. Knowledge (information-gathering) and memory storage
      a. Reading stories silently
      b. Reading selected portions of stories aloud (teacher or students)
      c. Viewing films retelling stories
      d. Listening to taped portions of stories
      e. Having teacher-led discussions of themes and genre
      f. Listening to outside speakers
      g. Viewing slides and transparencies
      h. Listening to oral reports by class members to share in information gained
      i. Touching and viewing models, dioramas, and realia
      j. Studying the history of the times, distinguishing fact from fancy
   2. Comprehension (through cognition)
      a. Writing summaries of the plots
      b. Performing character analyses from information in the texts
      c. Preparing book reports
      d. Answering questions of fact
      e. Preparing time lines
      f. Charting story development
      g. Preparing slides and other visual aids
      h. Taping conversations
      i. Having small-group discussions
   3. Application (convergent-divergent production)
      a. Taking a teacher-made test
      b. Giving a play based on the story
      c. Preparing a series of visual aids, with background sound, for sharing with other classes and with parents
   4. Analysis (breaking down): Comparing two heroes as to spiritual or physical leadership
   5. Synthesis (divergent production): Writing an epic poem about a present-day hero
   6. Evaluation (prediction): Comparing student products with others

B. Gifted students
   1. Knowledge (information-gathering) and memory storage: Reading, viewing, and listening
   2. Comprehension (through cognition)
      a. Student identification of themes, genre, metaphors, similes
      b. Answering questions of fact
   3. Application (convergent-divergent production)
      a. Taking a teacher-made test
      b. Taking a student-made test
      c. Preparing culminating activities
   4. Analysis (evaluation, convergent production)
      a. Studying the history of the period portrayed
      b. Identifying whether the story first appeared during the period portrayed or during a later time
      c. Comparing two epics as to the spiritual or physical leadership of the hero
      d. Comparing similar epics from different countries
   5. Synthesis (divergent production)
      a. Writing an epic poem about a present-day hero
      b. Comparing a myth with historical evidence from the same period
      c. Identifying probable motivations of characters
      d. Identifying the original audience for a story and why the people needed a national hero
      e. Comparing epic conventions of a variety of heroic stories
      f. Comparing plot as told in the written story and as shown in films or on television
   6. Evaluation (prediction)
      a. Comparing student-made epics with original ones
      b. Discussing the roles of heroes in the development of a nation
      c. Asking who the present-day heroes are and whether they are derived from books or from the electronics media
      d. Examining (1) how the hero has changed as recorded in films; and (2) what is meant by an antihero
      e. Comparing the role of stereotype in communicating a message in the epics and on television
      f. Determining whether the "epic convention" is a form of stereotype
      g. Hazarding some guesses as to how heroes are made known to their followers
      h. Discussing whether actions speak louder than words
      i. Predicting who will be tomorrow's heroes

The relative weight given to the various levels of intellectual tasks should be adjusted according to the talents of the students being taught. The teacher must provide an arena in which students can accomplish tasks that they might not do unless given appropriate help and direction.

Useful Suggestions

In the case of average students, considerable guidance should be offered by which they may acquire needed information. The language used by authors may need interpretation, and concepts may need clarification through many devices such as discussion and questioning. Students should have considerable help in clarifying their ideas and perfecting their skills. Although opportunities should be given to all students to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate, the major emphasis for most students should be on helping them gain information and build skills that they did not have at the beginning of the unit.

The gifted, on the other hand, need less guidance for the first two steps. Many can read and interpret new material quite adequately. They can pass a test without much teacher-guided study and discussion. Emphasis for them should be on the understanding of the subject in depth. As they learn to analyze the material, they should then be led to develop new and more complete works of their own creation. Finally, they should evaluate their own products against some accepted standard and plan or predict further studies along the same or similar lines.

Young people should examine their own beliefs and attitudes. By contrasting the literary heroes of the past with those of the present, boys and girls will make some important discoveries concerning their own attitudes toward heroism. Students who are now developing, sometimes painfully, a sense of their own identity in grades seven through nine will find strength in a selection of books composed in many different times and places, about many types of human characteristics and situations, and by authors of different styles, temperaments, and attitudes toward the quality and meaning of experience.

Chapter 3

The Faust Theme in Literature

As a young person enters adolescence, he perceives the world in entirely new ways. The absolutes of childhood give way to doubt and ambiguity. The adolescent finds that he is expected to make decisions for which he has limited background and that the possibilities for choice are increasing rapidly. He finds himself being pulled in many directions and being addressed by many voices. He is unable to handle his affairs on a clear-cut basis.

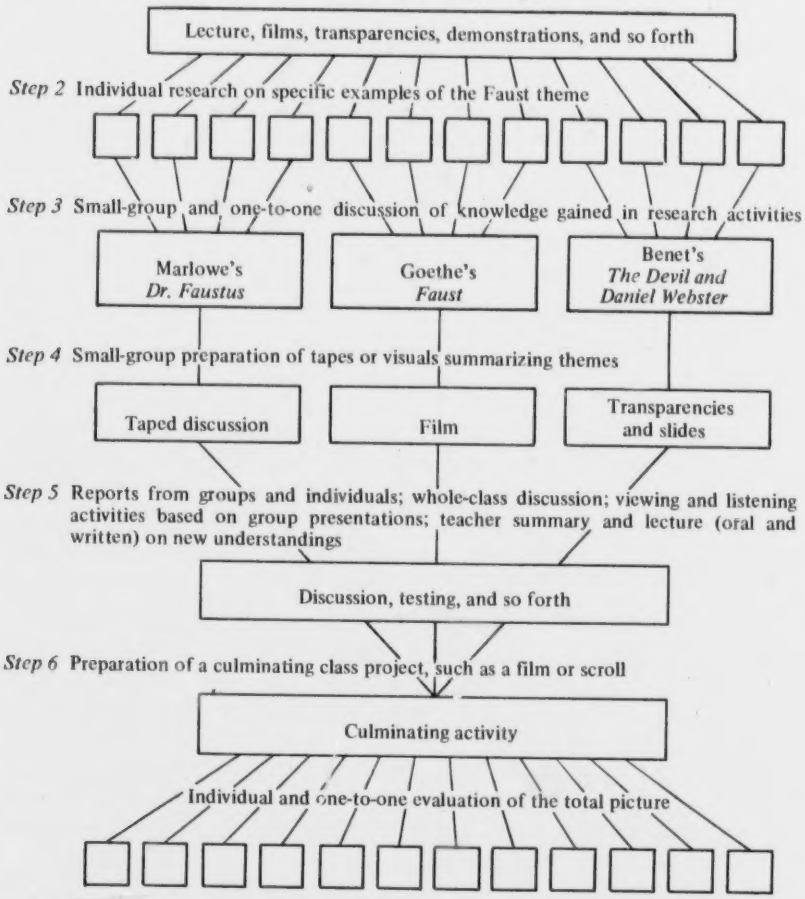
Deciding which way to turn will probably never be more acute than during junior high school years. The student must learn the nuances of language; he must learn shades of gray. A major decision-making strategy becomes necessary when students need help in handling temptations. They need opportunities to talk about temptation impersonally without identifying their own insecurities for all to see. A study of some of the Faust stories can help young people examine their problems of temptation without having their privacy violated. A schematic for using discovery techniques in the study of the Faust theme is given in Figure 1.

Faust Theme

Generally speaking, the Faust stories have the attitude-building potential of early morality plays. As teachers and students discuss the stories, many opportunities arise for an examination of whether an action is right or wrong.

The story of Faust is based on the old and widespread legend of a man who sold his soul to the devil. A few teen-agers have read Steven Vincent Benet's *The Devil and Daniel Webster,* and more have seen the film based on Benet's story because it is often shown on television, particularly at Halloween. The two great classics of Faust literature – *The Tragedy of Dr. Faustus,* written by Christopher Marlowe, and *Faust,* written by Johann von Goethe – are less familiar. *Black Magic,* a film made in the 1940s starring Orson Welles, tells the tale of Cagilostro and is based on Dumas' *Memoirs of a Physician.* The opera *Faust,* by Gounod, and John Hersey's *Too Far To Walk* are additional restatements of the Faust theme. Less known is Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer.* Some would include Samuel Beckett's *Murphy* in Faustian literature. The possibilities are almost unlimited, particularly if teachers include films, operas, and television shows.

Step 1 Brief outline (by teacher) of basic ideas treated in the story of Faust, who sold his soul to the devil for personal gains in knowledge or power


Lecture, films, transparencies, demonstrations, and so forth
Step 2 Individual research on specific examples of the Faust theme
Step 3 Small-group and one-to-one discussion of knowledge gained in research activities
Marlowe's Dr. Faustus
Goethe's Faust
Benet's The Devil and Daniel Webster
Step 4 Small-group preparation of tapes or visuals summarizing themes
Taped discussion
Film
Transparencies and slides
Step 5 Reports from groups and individuals; whole-class discussion; viewing and listening activities based on group presentations; teacher summary and lecture (oral and written) on new understandings
Discussion, testing, and so forth
Step 6 Preparation of a culminating class project, such as a film or scroll
Culminating activity
Individual and one-to-one evaluation of the total picture

Step 7 Written or oral reports or projects by individuals summarizing information gained from participating in class discussions, from listening to tapes prepared by the small groups, from viewing visuals made by individuals and groups, from doing research, and from listening to teacher lectures

Figure 1. Schematic for using discovery techniques in the study of the Faust theme

In essence a Faust story is one in which the main character of the story makes a pact with the devil to gain superhuman power or superhuman knowledge. This theme can be found in many early writings of Jewish origin, such as the Talmud, the Kabbalah, and the books of magic like Enoch.

The second portion of the Faust theme deals with the belief that human knowledge, as distinguished from divine revelation, is essentially evil. Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus,* primarily an expression of early popular Protestantism, expresses antagonism toward the scientific and classical tendencies of the Renaissance. Because Marlowe was basically a humanist, the teacher may wish to present for discussion the question of whether Marlowe wrote the play with tongue in cheek. *Dr. Faustus* is based on a biography of the real Dr. Faust, a self-styled philosopher who traveled about Germany in the first half of the sixteenth century practicing magic, telling fortunes, and selling pretended cures. He died mysteriously about 1540, and the legend soon sprang up that he had been carried off by the devil.

Faust Legends

The Faust legends and the facts often become confused. For example, the story of Theophilus was popular in Western Europe during the Middle Ages. Theophilus was a Cilician archdeacon who, according to legend, had sold his soul to Satan to clear himself of a false charge brought against him by his bishop. And Gerbert (Pope Sylvester II) was one of a number of popes who acquired a reputation among Protestants of dealing with the devil. These tales were believed wholeheartedly during an age when witchcraft and the involvement of devils in human affairs were accepted. According to the lore of the times, witches were those who conferred with the devil and performed some act for him. Much of the cult consisted of pagan religious rites that had survived from pre-Christian times. People believed in the witches' Sabbath, a supposed midnight assembly of witches, devils, and sorcerers for the celebration of rites and orgies. Similar rites are described or referred to in early Faust stories to lend authenticity to the tale.

Comparison of Personalities

Students enjoy comparing the personalities of various devils. Marlowe's Mephistophilis admits himself to be a poor devil. He is but "a servant to great Lucifer," whereas Scratch, in *The Devil and Daniel Webster,* appears to be Lucifer himself. The Mephistopheles (note the difference in spelling) created by Goethe is a compassionate devil who, together with the archangels Raphael, Gabriel, and Michael, notes "mankind's self-torturing pains." In the prologue to

the play, he tells the Lord that mankind would have fared better had the Lord not given man "a gleam of heavenly light"; namely, reason. Students working on Samuel Beckett's *Murphy* may find it hard to locate the devil himself although Murphy's lack of reason certainly is apparent. While Breed in John Hersey's novel *Too Far To Walk* has many devilish characteristics (among them a certain smell of brimstone), students should examine all possibilities in their search for devils. It is possible that John Fist's parents are the devils.

Identification of Era

One of the most challenging assignments in a unit on Faust is for students to attempt to identify, by the use of evidence from the book, the era in which the story about Faust was written; that is, evidence on the personality of the devil. A student can deduce much about the author Christopher Marlowe from Dr. Faustus' command to Mephistophilis to "go and return [as] an old Franciscan friar; that holy shape becomes a devil best." That comment tells much about the century in which the play was written and the audience that viewed it. Goethe, on the other hand, lived in a different age. The spirit of revolt and scientific investigation was worldwide. Americans had rejected the idea of the "divine right" of kings through a great revolution. The French were involved in a similar statement of the worth of the common man at the time when the first fragment of *Faust* was published. Rousseau and Voltaire had thundered their conviction that the human intellect must accept the challenge of dealing with human problems and that eternal damnation must not and could not be the penalty for a man's seeking knowledge.

Goethe's Mephistopheles accuses the Lord of doing mankind no favor by giving man the power to reason. The age of reason led mankind into an age of revolution, and Goethe's life spanned the transition. Goethe's Mephistopheles was the very spirit of scepticism, of denial. He could see no difference between high and low, good and bad. He felt no discontent with his devilish role, unlike Marlowe's earlier devil, who knew he was a fallen angel forced to spend eternity in unsavory hell, this earth.

Some students will want to examine Milton's *Paradise Lost* for further details on the fall of Lucifer, "most dearly loved of God." The person of Lucifer (the "light bearer"), his history, and the legends surrounding him fit into both the Faust theme and another great theme of literature, the Prometheus theme.

Students should discuss the Good Angel and the Bad Angel that Marlowe has provided to give helpful suggestions to Dr. Faustus. Similar heavenly guides are not provided by twentieth century writers. The student should compare the pacts drawn up between the

devils and the "Fausts" of the various stories and the eventual disposition of each Faust's soul.

Changes in Faust Figure

Just as the concept of the hero in literature has changed over the centuries, so has the Faust figure changed. Considerable examination of the history of the times is necessary to make the sort of comparisons we suggest. For example, although *The Devil and Daniel Webster* purports to be about events that took place in the mid-1800s, the story itself and the treatment of Faust and the devil fit more exactly in the 1930s when it was written by Benet. Why?

Students can find many thought-provoking sources for discussion by examining the emergence of demagogues Mussolini and Hitler during the 1930s. Benet may have been reflecting his concern for the world situation when he described Daniel Webster's celebrated argumentative powers. Marshall McLuhan claims (in *Understanding Media*) that radio provided the tribal drums that carried Hitler and Mussolini to their objectives. Daniel Webster might have become President as he wished if radio had existed when he was alive. According to Plato the proper size of a city can be estimated by the number of people who can hear the voice of a public speaker. Did Webster live one century too early?

Still more thought-provoking is the possibility that the transistor radios dearly loved by today's teen-agers may be today's equivalent of Marlowe's good and bad angels. To what voices are teen-agers listening? Who whispers in their ears?

At this point the teacher is going to have to search extensively before he finds any "authoritative" bases for examination. The questions presented are so big and research so limited that class and teacher are thrown into a situation where creative thought is imperative.

Modern Faust Themes

Writers have claimed that many of the television programs of the late 1950s and early 1960s were, in effect, equivalent to the morality plays of the Middle Ages. The heroes could be readily identified by their white hats and white horses. The villains were equally stereotyped. The "good guys" always won and the "bad guys" always lost.

A 1968 film, *Rosemary's Baby*, was based on the dismay and fright felt by a woman who thought that the father of her unborn child was the devil. The idea of this film may have sprung from the *Screwtape Letters*, a book in which C. S. Lewis, the author, has the devil complain that the Enemy (God) enjoys a unique advantage

because his Son has been a human and, therefore, understands human problems. The devil never had this opportunity until Hollywood gave him a potentially "human" son.

The Faust theme is a popular one with young people because it deals with some of the same mysterious and secret themes now becoming popular in films and on television. The film *2001: A Space Odyssey* was popular with teen-agers because it gives no answers. The viewers must decide for themselves the meaning of the black monolith and the reason for the playing of "The Blue Danube" in the background as the space odyssey commences.

Today's young people want no prepackaged delivery of somebody else's ideas. They want to be involved in the process of inquiry. They want to make their own discoveries. The English teacher can provide opportunities during which students become responsible agents for discovering classroom content and making thoughtful generalizations.

Results of Study

By examining some of the temptations of the central figure in the Faust stories, students will be able to deal more knowledgeably with their search for right answers in a chaotic world. Because many young persons feel that the choices they must make are unique to their own generation, the most valuable part of such a unit of study is the discovery that people have always been tempted. The study can provide skills in how to make objective evaluations, how to make decisions about temptation, and how to use strategies based on contingencies or on absolutes. The attainment of these higher levels can be a creative process for the teacher and for his students.

Chapter 4

The Prometheus Theme in Literature

Extraordinarily gifted young people often identify strongly with Prometheus. They see, in Prometheus' daring revolt against Zeus, some of their own aspirations and ambitions. For them, he is the eternal spirit of revolt. They cannot do less than feel empathy even though, at the same time, they may understand why he was punished.

Lack of Understanding

As they mature, some of the most talented boys and girls find an increasing lack of understanding among others for their ideas and actions. Because they are superbly and uniquely gifted in intellectual matters, they often feel lonely and misinterpreted. Many special programs for the gifted are aimed at fifth and sixth graders. One can ask whether these programs are aimed at that level because relatively few adults can perform the intellectual gymnastics feasible for gifted persons aged twelve and older.

Prometheus' act of stealing the sacred fire from Zeus for the benefit of mankind is often interpreted by young gifted persons as paralleling their own actions. They know the frustrations of having their own innocent, noncalculated questions interpreted as revolt. They recognize a kindred soul in Prometheus, whose only guilt, they feel, was that he sought an answer for mankind's problems.

One highly gifted seventh grader reported with amazement that his parents yelled at him when he installed his own bedside phone. Little did he know that the local phone company looks with displeasure on such experiments. All he wanted to discover was whether he had the ability to install the telephone. It seemed to him that his actions could save a great deal of time and labor. He was surprised when others were disturbed.

One ethically gifted tenth-grade girl was chagrined to find that teachers did not welcome her predictably astute questions as to the "rightness" of given subjects, whether they concerned class assignments or class discussions. An intellectually gifted student in the eighth grade suffered extensive self-recrimination when he was expelled from his science and foreign language classes. His offense? He had asked, too many times, "How do you know that this statement is true?"

If, as is common, the extremely gifted see Prometheus as the eternal spirit of the unchained mind, then such students often feel a strong sense of empathy for his position. Many, encouraged by an increased understanding of Promethean frustrations, will be encouraged to aim high and to assume the role for which they are uniquely equipped.

In his essay on Byron and Goethe, Giuseppe Mazzini, the great Italian political idealist, wrote of Lord Byron:

> He seems at times a transformation of that immortal Prometheus . . . whose cry of agony, yet of futurity, sounded above the cradle of the European world; and whose grand and mysterious form, transfigured by time, reappears from age to age, between the entombment of one epoch and the accession of another; to wail forth the lament of genius, tortured by the presentiment of things it will not see realized in its time.[1]

Gifted young people often sense the terrible aloneness that often accompanies genius. Literature may provide, for the extremely bright, the only available door by which they can enter the community of genius to which they rightfully belong. If they begin to identify with those Promethean thinkers who, "transfigured by time, reappear from age to age," then perhaps their own uniqueness will be less of a burden for them.

Legend of Prometheus

According to the Greek myth, Prometheus was a Titan who stole the fire of heaven from Zeus and gave it to man. As punishment he was bound to a rock in the Caucasus and thereafter tortured by vultures that fed on his liver. In some versions of the myth, Prometheus created the first man from mud he had found in a river bed. He was the friend and benefactor of mankind and defended men against the gods who desired to destroy the human race and supplant it with a new and better species. Prometheus stole the heavenly fire and, carrying it in a fennel stalk, gave it to the few people who escaped the "deluge" of Deucalion.

Aeschylus protrayed Prometheus as "nailed" to the rock when suffering for his attempt to benefit mankind. The tale of Epimetheus (*afterthought*) and Prometheus (*forethought*) is certainly a portion of the legend. In this myth Epimetheus distributed various talents such as swiftness of foot and keenness of vision to various animals at the time of the creation of the earth. Prometheus, finding none of such gifts left for humanity, gave to man the ultimate weapon, fire.

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[1]Giuseppe Mazzini, "Byron and Goethe," in *Essays: Selected from the Writings, Literary, Political, and Religious, of Joseph Mazzini*, London: Walter Scott, 1887, pp. 106-7.

Material for Study

A hasty survey of the Promethean legend reveals almost limitless possibilities for examination. The whole question of fire mythology embraces a very wide cycle of similar benefactors, legends of whom may be found in the folklore of nations not even remotely connected with the Greeks. Similarly, historical evidence concerning a series of floods in Mesopotamia, as uncovered in the past 20 years, gives new insight to students examining the deluge myths. The folklore of many people contains reference to a great flood.

Some students will see a relationship between Prometheus and Lucifer (the "light bearer"), the fallen angel. Others will wish to explore Prometheus' role as savior or redeemer of his people. Still others will consider fire and knowledge parallel, in common with Aeschylus and Shelley; such a concept opens up many possibilities. Perhaps the doctor in South Africa who made the first heart transplant was assuming the Promethean role, "stealing the sacred fire of heaven."

Prometheus as Scientist

Budding scientists will undoubtedly see Prometheus as a scientist. The similarity between the use of fire and the discovery of atomic energy, together with the potential for both good and evil inherent in each, is inescapable. Other scientific advances, from space travel to development of "the pill" for limiting population, can be claimed to be analogous to the discovery of fire. Medical editor Harry Nelson reported on a panel brought together by the American College of Physicians. One member reported that recent experiments with animals indicated that drugs that will increase man's intelligence significantly will be available within five to ten years. He speculated that if a drug makes it possible to raise the IQ of any person 20 points, the changes that would suddenly be needed in education and politics would be tremendous. In addition, religious and moral values would change. Who would decide whether the drug should be used? Who would determine its recipients? What would be the criteria?[2]

The philosophical and physiological question of just when a man is "dead" becomes vital in the era of heart transplants. Recently, laws have been rewritten so that clinical death is based on the absence of brain waves rather than on the absence of heartbeats in the body of the potential donor. *Newsweek* (August 12, 1968) included a description of the disposition of the body of twenty-four-year-old Steven Jay Mandell, who had died of an intestinal infection that had made him a chronic invalid. With the help of the Cryonics Society,

[2]Harry Nelson, "Medical News," *Los Angeles Times*, May 1, 1967.

Mandell directed that his body be frozen solid and maintained indefinitely in a "cryo-capsule" against the day when, hopefully, he will be thawed out and cured. His frozen corpse joined some half-dozen other clinically dead bodies that have already been placed in cryo-capsules.

Prometheus in Literature

Ray Bradbury, in a story entitled "The Golden Apples of the Sun," puts his modern-day Prometheus in a space ship. Bradbury's spaceman proposes to steal a giant cupful of the sun itself, of "the bodiless body and the fleshless flesh of the sun." As the ship nears the sun, the Captain (his only name) remembers those mythical heroes who pioneered this voyage, among them Prometheus and Icarus, who perished for his effrontery.

Bradbury, detailing the Captain's thoughts, writes the following:

> A million years ago a naked man on a lonely northern trail saw lightning strike a tree. And while his clan fled, with bare hands he plucked a limb of fire, broiling the flesh of his fingers, to carry it, running in triumph, shielding it from the rain with his body, to his cave, where he shrieked out a laugh and tossed it full on a mound of leaves and gave his people summer.[3]

The contrast between that naked man on a lonely northern trail and the spaceship full of men in the twentieth-century saga prompts us to ask questions. If Prometheus, in our era, has become a shipload of men, what does this say to us about mankind in our technological world? Perhaps the role of God must be filled by a committee as life-and-death choices are made. That is, for example, who should be eligible for a heart transplant? Who is sufficiently valuable that his body should be deep-frozen for later revival? Which couples should be issued licenses to have children in a world where overpopulation makes children a threat?

Aeschylus, who wrote *Prometheus Bound* five centuries before the birth of Christ, portrayed a hero who was both victim and rebel. Although Zeus, as conceived by Aeschylus, was a tyrant, the hero's reckless defiance was shocking to Greek audiences. The chorus, for example, probably portrayed the sentiments of the Greeks with accuracy. At first they pitied Prometheus, but toward the end of the play they were alienated by the hero's impiety.

Percy Bysshe Shelley, on the other hand, was prophetic when he dismissed Jupiter to unending nothingness in *Prometheus Unbound,* written in 1819. Shelley, who wrote in an era when the frenzies of

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[3]Ray Bradbury, "The Golden Apples of the Sun," in *The Golden Apples of the Sun.* London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1970, p. 189.

the revolutionary movement had exhausted men's thought, found little acceptance of his poem among contemporaries. His argument was that Prometheus could be unbound, or the human mind freed, only by getting rid of a god created by the mind of man.

By contrast, Mary Shelley, his wife, found instant success for a Promethean story she wrote in 1818, *Frankenstein.* Although composed in the Gothic style, which was popular in the early 1800s but which seems tedious and overdrawn to modern readers, *Frankenstein* continues to be a bloodcurdling thriller. Its subtitle, *A Modern Prometheus,* raises certain questions. What will mankind do with his new knowledge? What limits should be placed on his inquiries? Whereas Prometheus stole heaven's secret for man, and Frankenstein has challenged the gods in the same way, Mary Shelley's novel asks why.

One gifted fifteen-year-old child purported to discover a parallel between the monster with his threatening exterior but lovable interior and the racial upsets which, he felt, were at least partially caused by unfamiliar (and perhaps threatening to some) facial characteristics and colors. He asked if the same sort of misunderstandings might not be predicted in the event that humanoid creatures were discovered by space travelers.

Prometheus as Prototype

Most young people will benefit from and enjoy a unit concerning Prometheus. The highly gifted will base their own future actions upon it. Divergent thinkers, inventors, and explorers of ideas will see in Prometheus their prototype.

Chapter 5

Case Studies

In a follow-up study conducted four years after the initiation of a special elementary school program for students identified as gifted, Mary Meeker found that students receiving A grades in high school had scored almost exclusively in the 130-136 IQ range on the Stanford-Binet Test of Intelligence. Students with the highest IQs (above 141) made mostly C grades. Dr. Meeker notes that a majority of all students continued to score above the ninetieth percentile on group achievement tests regardless of their grades in secondary school. She states:

> It is questionable now as to whether the elementary program had impact at the high school level. It is uncertain whether many of these gifted students are university-bound at all. A reevaluation of goals for gifted students needs to be considered. . . . It is a regrettable fact that high school placement in classes perpetuates the conveyor belt of performance and that little effort and time are given to remedial actions for the nonperforming gifted. . . .
>
> Our findings would indicate that those children who are performing at and test at a gifted level early in their school careers do not necessarily remain so at a performance level in high school, and that potentially brilliant achievers in later life are lost as a consequence of inadequate attention to their needs during the secondary school years.[1]

Some authorities have noted that boys testing above 145 IQ and girls testing above 155 IQ often have adjustment problems in school. If measured by the number of A's received in high school, achievement appears to be limited to the "barely gifted."

Placement Errors

The "conveyor belt of performance" noted by Dr. Meeker begins in the intermediate school or junior high school. Acceleration into advanced classes commences in the seventh, eighth, and ninth grades. In the self-contained classes of the elementary school, recognition of the individual's potential for leadership or creativity can be made by sensitive teachers. In junior high school and later in secondary school, placement in honors programs is based largely on performance as measured by grades.

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[1]Mary Meeker, "Differential Syndromes of Giftedness and Curriculum Planning: A Four-year Follow-up," *Journal of Special Education*, II (Winter, 1968), 192.

This practice leaves much to be desired. The truth is that many educators do not know what to do with "highly gifted" young people. When gifted children are ten years old or less, teachers and administrators are usually superior to the children in mental power. But about the time that the children reach early adolescence, they are at least as perceptive as many teachers and administrators. The failure of the latter to develop suitable criteria for student placement in honors programs has led to almost total dependence on academic grades in determining placement. Thus, A students are labeled "achievers" and are placed in honors programs; C students are labeled "nonachievers" and are placed in regular classes.

One can imagine the predicament of the gifted student who has been placed in a class where average performance is the norm. In a regular class the teacher should, because of the nature of the students involved, place primary importance on information gathering and confirmation. Extremely bright boys and girls, even if they have not received A grades in the past, should not be placed in such a situation. They learn differently. Their curriculum must, therefore, be different.

Dr. Meeker reports that six boys in her sampling who have IQ scores over 150 "will have real difficulty in getting into state universities on the basis of their grades." She states that two of the six have been sent to continuation school, another is a dropout, and three are failing to maintain passing grades.[2] Something is wrong with an educational system in which six such talented boys are dropouts or are failing. For an almost parallel situation, one can imagine what would happen if an intermediate or secondary school teacher were sent into a fifth-grade classroom and asked to carry out the assignments made by the teacher of that fifth-grade class. Would the teacher do what he is told?

Case Study: Stanley K.

Stanley K. (not his real name) is now the subject of our inquiry. Stan is now entering his junior year in high school. Identified as having an IQ of "over 170" in elementary school, Stan had no problems until he entered the sixth grade. His fifth-grade teacher put him into an individualized program in arithmetic, and Stan did all the required assignments in the fifth-grade textbook and the required work in the sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade books. In sixth-grade mathematics Stan marked time, but in seventh grade he was placed, along with accelerated eighth graders, in a special program of ninth-grade algebra. When Stanley got to eighth grade, the interme-

[2] *Ibid.*, 193.

diate school had no option but to place him in a tenth-grade geometry class. Stan's mother – patient creature – provided the daily transportation necessary to get him from intermediate school (grades six through eight) to the secondary school and back. Twelve-year-old Stanley (who had been accelerated just one grade level, according to district policy) now was competing with average fifteen-year-olds. He received a grade of B in the course.

Stan's high school teacher reported that the boy had never brought his book to class, nor a pencil, nor suitable paper. He was nervous, had a short attention span, and showed little interest in the class. He never did his homework although, she admitted, his quiz scores and test papers were mostly perfect. The teacher had given him a B grade primarily because of missed homework assignments and poor attitude.

At the same time that Stan was performing so poorly in tenth-grade mathematics, he was performing very well in his eighth-grade combined English and social science class at the intermediate school. His teacher, goaded by Stan's ne'er-do-well attitude toward her plans for the other members of the class, which was composed entirely of highly gifted students whose IQs were over 140, developed an English program just for Stan.

The teacher was enrolled at the time in a graduate level college course in comparative literature to fulfill requirements for a teaching major. She asked Stanley to read works by Franz Kafka and Samuel Beckett along with her. Together, teacher and student composed the evaluative essays required for the teacher's class. Stan played out the chess game in Beckett's *Murphy* and reported to his teacher that, contrary to her supposition, Endon actually wins the game. Beckett does not tell the reader who wins; he leaves it to the reader to find out. Cursory examination of paragraphs before and after the game can lead readers to suppose that Murphy won. Since knowing who won the chess game is pivotal to an understanding of the message in *Murphy*, Stan's contribution to his teacher's participation in her college course was invaluable.

Predictably, Stan derived considerable pleasure from his activities. Although he did not complete any of the homework assignments, he took the required tests and received A grades. When the class was in session, he accomplished a number of things: he read a great deal, he wrote some very fine poetry, and he dreamed a bit.

If the teacher decided to discuss some important matter during class, Stan closed his book and listened. On one occasion like this, Stan wanted desperately to pursue the subject of God's role in decision making as it related to Wilder's *Bridge of San Luis Rey*.

Unprepared psychologically or informationally to deal with the situation, the teacher cut Stan off sharply: "Stanley! For goodness sake, go back to your reading!" His reaction? During the remainder of the period, Stanley was involved in writing furiously. At the sound of the bell he handed the teacher a beautifully written Beckett-like playlet, the almost hidden message of which was that some teachers are terrified when asked to discuss important subjects in a classroom.

During a semester of immense productivity in English, Stanley was asked to discontinue his attendance in two other classes, foreign language and science. The suspending teachers reported that Stan was impossible to handle. Pressed for details, they said that he just kept asking questions. When the teachers had told the class that a certain thing was true, Stan would ask, "Yes, but . . . how do you know?" He didn't appear, they reported, to be actually trying to be difficult. On the other hand, his presence "stirred up the class" and "made things difficult." They could do a better job, they said, if Stan were not in the class. The principal, while sympathetic to Stan's problems, was even more sympathetic to the problems of the teachers. He agreed that Stan should drop their classes. Enrolled in a couple of courses about which he felt indifferent, Stan spent his time in the English teacher's other homeroom section whenever he could get her to write suitable excuses for his absences.

Stan's story does not have a happy ending. Convinced that he should be exposed to a "community of scholars" during his secondary school years, former teachers and the principal recommended to Stan's parents that he be placed in a private school. His parents agreed that the local public school system appeared to have little for Stan. They borrowed money and sent him off to a private college-preparatory school.

Expelled in his sophomore year, Stan now has rejected the possibility of rejoining middle-class society. He is a recognized user of drugs. At last report Stan was "passing" LSD. He sees nothing wrong in an individual's use of mind-expanding drugs. Although he knows that society has branded such use illegal, he claims the experience is worth the risk. He claims that society's laws are wrong, not those who use the drugs. He says, "What else is there? When you get right down to it, everybody is searching for just two things, thrills and sex."

Surely, educators can offer Stan something as exciting as LSD. He once knew, briefly, the challenge of scholarly research in intermediate school and loved it. Stan's search is acute and obvious. Schools do have something better than the LSD, which, he now feels, encompasses his existence; they have *knowledge*. Perhaps, by making

studies more relevant to student concerns, English teachers and others can save the Stans of this world from the choices this boy has made.

Avenues must be opened by which communication can be established with our highly gifted boys and girls. Today's folklore abounds with tales of young geniuses who, like Stanley K., have withdrawn from society. One of the major causes of this problem is the educational establishment. Some persons feel that the Beatles, for example, became successful largely by abandoning straight and narrow pathways. Three of the four were dropouts from school. Perhaps it would be well to take a look at some geniuses who might not have become successful except for the schools.

Case Study: David M.

David M., according to his mother, went to school for one purpose only, to learn to read. Once he had learned to read, in first grade, school no longer had anything to offer him. By the end of fourth grade, David had become the "monster of Park Elementary School." He took pride in reporting that two elementary school teachers, three Sunday school teachers, and a Cub Scout den mother had resigned from their posts the year after David had been in their groups.

David's fifth-grade teacher was the first person to see anything but a troublesome person when she looked at David. Actually, she wasn't his original fifth-grade teacher, for David had been placed with a male teacher because "everybody knew that he needed firm discipline." In mid-November, "Mrs. X" wrote a note to her principal suggesting that David be placed in her class. She observed that David spent a fair proportion of every school day outside the door of his present classroom. She recognized that he probably deserved it. Much of the "you are being rejected because you are impossible" time was spent by David lounging at the window of her classroom and participating verbally, from time to time, in the activities of her class.

The teacher concluded with an observation that "David is a cat of another stripe and must learn to blend with his surroundings, but only after his stripes have been recognized as valuable ones. He may be a skunk, but on the other hand he may be a baby tiger."

Someday, this monumentally patient and dedicated lady promises, she will write a book on "monsters I have known." Now entering college, David chuckles appreciatively, for he knows that his exploits will be featured.

Among the voluminous unpublished notes that she maintained for the school psychologist who gave the test that identified David's IQ as being 167 are the following:

> When my class was sketching today, David was kicked out of the other fifth-grade classroom because somebody had kicked him in the eye. My first greeting was, "Hi, David! How are things in outer space?" His reply was a prompt "I don't know. The last time I was there was July 24." (He had been to Disneyland on July 24.)
>
> When I leave the teachers' room, I find him waiting at the place in the playground nearest the administration building. His conversation washes over me like a wave. Today he began saying, " . . . And then they built a tree house. . . ." I was completely lost until I remembered that yesterday he had been talking to me about *Swiss Family Robinson.* When the play in which he has the lead is being rehearsed, he carries his own part admirably but also directs, challenges, spurs on, and belittles other members of the cast. When a play in which he does not appear is being rehearsed, he moves continually about the room, rearranging my shelves, reading from books, allowing them to fall wherever they may, slumping into the teacher's chair (if I'm not in it) to read anything on my desk. When I am instructing, David will yawn out loud, stand up to get a drink, draw pictures to show a friend. . . .
>
> I firmly believe that the reason he got so much higher a score on the individual test than on the group test was that he had you [the psychologist] as an audience. Do you remember how he took the test? The furrowed brow? The intense concentration? The triumphant delivery of the answer? He was giving one of the best performances of his career, wasn't he?
>
> David masterminded a surprise party on my birthday. He just loved all the maneuvering, right up to the time I entered the room and assumed the limelight. He just couldn't stand that! He led the group in a rousing hip-hip-hooray! Then, because he loved it so much, he did it all over again. He said that I might open my gifts but insisted on sitting at my desk and helping. He told the girls when to bring in the cake. He told the quartet when to sing! When I finally sent him to his seat, he continued to shout instructions. When I ignored him, he stood on his desktop and shouted.
>
> [She once said to David:] "Tell me, if you were absolutely convinced that you were the one worthwhile person in this whole universe, wouldn't you (1) stand in back of the soloist during her performance in the play and move your arms in a way that makes her appear ridiculous; (2) ride your bike down the middle of a narrow dirt road, forcing cars to follow you at a snail's pace; (3) tell the teacher that her class is dull and that she needs you to stir things up; (4) feel bound, if assigned to deliver milk to kindergarten classes, to entertain the children each time you deliver until the kindergarten teacher asks your teacher not to send David any more?"

David possessed an intelligence nearly 90 degrees at variance with the majority of his classmates; he was also spectacularly gifted in histrionics. He was always "on stage." It was impossible for him ever to yield the spotlight to anybody else, including the teacher. This

talent eventually paid off for David. He became a successful actor in secondary school and received the "Leo" award for outstanding actor of the year and two Optimists' "Youth of the Year" awards. Currently, he is a promising college freshman with a potential for achievement as actor, producer, singer, or television programmer.

Containing such vast potential in the ordinary fifth-grade classroom was almost impossible. What did his teacher do? She structured her English curriculum around David. Taking his miserably lettered, misspelled, hastily drawn-up notes, she made plays of them. She wrote them on ditto masters and let the class and David work out the details together. With David, this lady of extremely limited background in music presented two musical productions that year, *The Magic Hat of Oz* and *Hawaiian Eye*. Both productions were featured in the local press as examples of creativity in teaching. Neither, however, had much to do with teacher creativity, for she never presented another after David left. Each production did, however, have much to do with David's creativity. David took the major role in each, trained the secondary leads, taught the songs to the chorus, painted the backgrounds, made the tickets, counted the house, wrote the press releases, and prompted the actors. David was so busy doing his best that he didn't have time for lesser activities.

David himself recognizes his fifth grade as a dividing line. In an autobiography written last year, David comments that "all this would probably never have happened if I had not had Mrs. X in the fifth grade."

Toward the close of his freshman year in high school, David invited his former fifth-grade teacher to attend a school play in which he was appearing. In her note of thanks, the teacher said, "Sitting in the audience last Friday night was pure pleasure for yours truly." She commented on the program notes, in which David was described as a House of Commons (student council) member and a nominee for the "Leo" award for outstanding actor (never previously open to freshmen.) And she reported her delight in his better than B grade average in school. She said:

> My greatest pleasure came from seeing how well you "relate" to the people around you. Obviously, you have many friends. Obviously, you have learned that we are all less than perfect but can be enjoyed and appreciated even with our frailties. Obviously, you have learned to let others assume the center of the stage part of the time. Somehow I had the feeling that one semester with me would transform you from rather a dreadful little boy to a well-adjusted, easy-to-get-along-with, slightly larger boy. It didn't happen quite so quickly. Maybe this experience will give me patience to work along with other difficult children, secure in the knowledge that my efforts are just

a part of the total picture, combined with the efforts of parents, other teachers, and the child involved. Things will work out although, perhaps, not this year.

Case Study: John N.

Along a different line, let us now consider the situation of John N. Unlike Stan and David, John has never been a problem to anybody except to John. John is the original Mr. Nobody, Mr. Anonymous. He "blends." He is a pleasant, average, apparently conforming individual. He is middle-sized, middle-operating, middle-looking. Everything about John is average. If you were a shop owner, you would cash John's check. If you were a science teacher, you would jump at the chance to get John for a lab assistant. If you were the principal's secretary, you'd be charmed to have John as your noontime relief at the phone and desk. John is a typical "dependable" student.

In junior high school John got B's in most classwork, an occasional C, and, more often, an A. He was a "good B student," except for one thing. John had an IQ of nearly 160.

Last year, John burglarized his high school of over $500 worth of sound equipment. John himself is a little vague as to why he committed the crime. He never used the sound equipment that he had stolen. He hid it away in his "clubhouse," a former playhouse behind his home, until the day on which the local police came and carried the equipment away. John says, "I never thought of myself as a thief. It was sort of a "Mission Impossible" thing."

Nobody who knows John thinks of him as a thief. The "thing that happened" (John's theft) was so divergent from the activities normally expected of John that those who love him think of it as temporary insanity unsupported by the evidence of years. Yet the deed is there. "Good old dependable John" is a thief.

At this time John has been processed by the machinery of the law. He was excused from the school where he committed the crime and was placed, by means of an "adjustment" transfer, in another local high school. The police have temporarily shelved his case. If he does nothing untoward in the years between now and his eighteenth birthday, John's record will be cleared. John is seeing a psychiatrist once a week. He is back on the straight and narrow.

The question to be asked here is whether anyone could have predicted what was coming. What clues were there in John's past that might have warned the adults in his life that trouble was brewing?

One can cancel the usual sources of trouble. John's home background is so ordinary as to be almost a cliché. He comes from a pleasant middle-class family consisting of both parents, John, and a

younger brother and sister. The family belongs to a church and vacations together in the high Sierra. The mother does not work outside the home.

John's school records show no obvious sources of potential trouble. His grades, particularly in elementary school, were high, and teacher notations abound with such expressions as "trustworthy" and "dependable" and "pleasant." The only exception occurred in the sixth grade, where John's teacher commented that "John doesn't appear to have very many friends." Asked about his experiences in the sixth grade, John says, "I used to hide behind the ballroom because nobody liked me. That was the reason I volunteered to be the noontime office monitor for the principal's secretary."

When asked about the seventh grade or the eighth grade or the ninth grade, John says, "I was always put in those 'honors' classes. It seemed as if everybody in the class had the answer before I could put my ideas into the right words. By the time I got my hand up, somebody else had said what I wanted to say. When I tried to make friends with other kids between classes, the bell would ring before we even got started."

Uniquely talented in intellectual matters, John became more withdrawn in classroom and social contacts during early adolescence. His "just-average" performance in physical education kept him off school athletic teams. His "just-average" appearance and quiet demeanor effectively blocked early attempts to communicate with most girls. A glib tongue and easy manner were not John's "style," and he never pretended they were. He went to school dances and stood with his back against the wall, observing the hilarious antics of his peers. He attended the ball games and sat alone. In his classes John occupied a seat and did the assignments and took the tests. On a given school day, John probably uttered about 50 to 75 words.

John was, however, accomplishing many nonacademic and non-social things during this period. The abandoned playhouse mentioned previously became his project, and he paneled the interior with birch. He installed an intercom system between the playhouse and his home, wired the playhouse for lights, laid wall-to-wall carpeting, planted shrubs and flowers, dug out a fishpond, and installed a fountain. He built wall cabinets for his father's den and installed a stereo system for his mother. He volunteered to help the school librarian, spending hours after school systematizing her records and writing her yearly report. Observing the frustrations of his eighth-grade science teacher, he voluntarily spent many of his lunch periods scrubbing the test tubes and organizing the storage shelves of the science laboratory. Because he wasn't eating lunch that year and

found it difficult to communicate with his peers, spending his lunchtime in the lab was probably as good a plan as any. Why wasn't he eating lunch? John was using his lunch money to pay for a $300 tape recorder. Once he had purchased the recorder, he began to tape records borrowed from friends of his parents. John now has his own collection of classical and semiclassical music, acquired at no expense other than the purchase of the blank tapes. The collection is carefully catalogued and filed in his room, along with a variety of background sounds such as the roar of the surf and the wail of a fire engine.

In the ninth grade John found a friend. As the manager of the school's junior varsity teams, John was thrown in with the other managers. One of them, a fascinating older boy with many dreams of glory, became John's pal. Together they observed the school's microphones and sound equipment, much of which was seldom used and carelessly inventoried. The boys stole the equipment. Then, because of his basically law-abiding nature, John did nothing more than store it in his converted playhouse until the police showed up to take it back to school.

John was fortunate. Recognizing that John's conduct was not typical, the school's counselors and administrators came to his defense. The total resources of the school district were employed to help him. John was placed in an experimental "communications laboratory" in a different high school rather than in the regular English program. In this environment John's extraordinary talents were valued. He had a chance to work on activities in which he could achieve well. He made sound-tape backgrounds for visual presentations composed by other members of the class and worked on video-type projects. He examined the problem of interpersonal communication and discovered for himself that he needed to improve his contacts with others. By nature shy and retiring, John deliberately set out to become more communicative with adults and classmates. He forced himself to volunteer for speaking roles in the video presentations. As a tenth grader John taught himself to communicate verbally.

His creative potential was obvious in the laboratory. Many problems needed to be solved because the use of a laboratory for English was new and experimental. One problem was how to keep the sound track for a series of slides free of "bleeps" whenever the slides had to be changed. John solved this problem by putting the bleeps on one track of a stereo tape, the sound background on the other track. The bleep sound could be heard only in the earphones of the operator. He also perfected a system for projecting a butcher-

paper scroll on an opaque projector at a constant rate of speed. He developed a method by which seven heart sounds (the only ones available) could be duplicated and reduplicated into the number needed (59 "lub dubs") for a particular background.

During this course in which the English program centered on all forms of communication, John bloomed. His inherent talents were recognized and valued. He was able to see the need for further growth on his part in terms of spoken communication. He registered for Drama I the next year under the assumption that this class would provide an opportunity for him to develop his limited verbal skills. His grades were almost all A's during the year, and he made many new friends. He appeared increasingly relaxed and participated in class and social activities.

Together with his classmates, John assumed the role of inquirer. Knowing that his own research would be basic to the total understanding by the class of problems of heroism or temptation or ethics, John became increasingly more enthusiastic about literary research. He exhausted the resources of the high school library and then went on to the local public library. There are few sources of information in either with which John is not now acquainted, from Biblical encyclopedias to microfilm.

Implications for the Gifted

Young adolescents need particular help in bridging the period between childhood and adulthood. The gifted are no exception. During this time when the maturing individual must make choices based on limited background, teachers must attempt to close the generation gap through classroom activities that promote communication between youths and adults. Whether these activities are based on an examination of great themes in literature or on communications work in a special laboratory, the English teacher can provide the arena in which such an exchange is possible. By structuring the English program of the junior high school around the needs and concerns of the students involved, teachers can help the gifted to reach their own maximum potential.

Because the potential of extremely gifted young people is virtually unpredictable, the Stans and Davids and Johns of this world must be offered a program without limits. In no case should they be confined to a curriculum in which limits are set according to the talents of the adults who plan the program. With an open-end structure and unlimited possibilities for development of individual talents, these very exceptional young people will do well. America needs their talents. Our Stans must not be allowed to escape into drug-taking

and other antisocial activities. What we view in our theaters and on our television screens in the 1980s and 1990s depends on David and others like him. How the message is conveyed will be determined by media specialists like John. The fabric of tomorrow's society depends on educational opportunities now being offered to America's young people. What is taught and how it is taught will, to a large extent, determine the future.

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